

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** October 11, 2012

**Agenda Item:** Montana State Parks Biennial Fee Rule

**Division:** Parks

**Action Needed:** Approval of Tentative Rule

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 30 minutes

**Background** The Montana State Parks Biennial Fee Rule establishes fees and associated rules for the state park system. The rule identifies fees for entrance to state parks (nonresidents), camping at state parks, facility rental, guided tours (e.g. Lewis and Clark Caverns), and Special Uses at state parks. Fees are an important source of revenue for Montana State Parks and help to maintain sites, provide safe facilities and services to the public, and protect park resources. The commission last increased resident camping fees in 2002 and nonresident camping fees in 2010 and authorized camping reservation fees in 2010. The Biennial Fee Rule also provides direction to staff for managing visitor use, e.g. occupancy limits at campsites and permit requirements for group use and special events.

**Public Involvement Process & Results** The Parks Division will conduct a 30-day comment period (minimum) and invite the public to provide input on the proposed fee rule.

**Alternatives and Analysis** The Parks Division has prepared a draft fee rule for consideration by the Commission, including the following highlights:

- There are no proposed fee increases for camping or park entry. There is a small proposed increase for use of large yurts.
- New fees are proposed for use of the sewage dump station at Clearwater Junction, use of livestock corrals or pastures, hiker and bicyclist shared campsites and use of buildings (such as Bannack structures).
- Backcountry camping is redefined with a reduced fee (from \$7 per person to \$4 per person).
- Peak season is extended by one week on either end and to include the time period where potable water is provided and a higher level of service is provided.
- There is a proposed \$3.00 per night reduction in off season resident camping fees, as a means of acknowledging a lower level of service and amenities, particularly potable water during the off season.
- Reservation season is extended by one week on either end and to match up with peak season.
- The rules for applying resident senior/disabled camping discounts have been clarified.
- Check-in and check-out times for campsites, cabins, yurts and tepees have been clarified.
- The \$2 discount in vehicle entrance fees for disabled non-residents (from \$5 to \$3) is eliminated. Note: there is no statutory requirement for this discount.
- Campsite capacity definitions are established for single, double, quad, and group campsites.
- The rule establishes a fixed rate for large-group campsites based on maximum pre-determined campsite capacity (camping units and/or 8 person increments).
- Food storage rules are established with standards for allowable food storage techniques. These rules would be implemented only at parks located in prime bear habitat.
- Livestock use rules are established with standards for certified weed seed free feed.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale** The department recommends that the Commission approve the tentative rule as proposed and seek public comment.

**Proposed Motion** “I move that the Commission approve the tentative parks biennial fee rule pending public comment.”<sup>Rev. 2/03</sup>